



Advocacy Education Series: The Importance of Legislative Relationships

In advocacy, a relationship with your legislator is absolutely vital. It may seem intimidating at first, but with the proper tools and knowledge, building a legislative relationship can be quite easy. It just takes some time, patience, and motivation.

Like any healthy relationship, a relationship with your legislator is mutually beneficial. There are things that you bring to the table that your legislator wants, and there are things that your legislator brings to the table that you want.

Your legislator has the ability to change policy that impacts you, your community, and your clients. They have a megaphone for your issue or cause and can give you a chance to be heard at the highest level of state government.

You have valuable expertise on the criminal legal system. Legislators are bombarded daily with information, raw data, facts, and figures. It is impossible for legislators to be able to keep up with what is going on in every field, especially the complex world of criminal justice. You have the information that legislators desperately need.

While all constituents are important to a legislator, having an established relationship can facilitate more effective communication, whether in-person, by e-mail, or by phone, between you and your legislator. Your legislator will look at you not only as a constituent, but as a reliable inside source of relevant and vital information, and therefore is more likely to do what you ask them to do. You become their link to the world of criminal justice.

The end result of a good relationship with your legislator is that your legislator becomes easier to contact and you can serve as a resource on relevant policy issues.

For additional guidance or questions, please contact Monica L. Reid, Senior Director of Advocacy, at mreid@nacdl.org.